

VZCZCXRO3861
RR RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH
DE RUEHHI #0128/01 0330920
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 020919Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0819
INFO ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY 0435
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE USD FAS WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 HANOI 000128

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS
STATE PASS TO FDA (MPLAISER/RCAMPBELL/ECOREY)
USDA FOR FAS/OSTA/EPORTE
HHS/OSSI/DSI FOR OGHA (WSTIEGER/LVALDEZ/CHICKEY)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [EAGR](#) [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [VM](#)

SUBJECT: VIETNAM PROJECT NOMINATION FOR 2010 BIOTECHNOLOGY OUTREACH

REF: 2009 STATE 122732 - FY 2010 BIOTECH OUTREACH STRATEGY AND
DEPARTMENT RESOURCES
2009 HANOI 1050 - POST PROMOTES BIOTECH WHILE GVN CONSIDERS MORE
RESTRICTIVE BIOTECH LAWS

11. (SBU) Summary: Mission Vietnam is pleased to submit a two part project proposal for consideration by EEB as part of the 2010 Biotech Outreach Strategy (Reftels A and B). Vietnam is at a critical stage in its development of biotechnology. Although the Government of Vietnam (GVN) says it plans to launch biotech field trials this year and is building biotech partnerships with the United States, it continues to proceed with the draft Food Safety Law requiring mandatory labeling of food products with a minimum five percent biotech content. Mandatory labeling would disadvantage U.S. food and agricultural exports to Vietnam, and could negatively impact Vietnam's nascent biotech industry. Time to positively influence the DFSL is running out, as the Vietnam National Assembly (NA) will hold its final vote in early June.

12. (SBU) To address this critical situation, and to build on the successes of our previous biotech outreach activities, we propose a two part plan. Part one sends key NA members to the United States for a targeted U.S. Government-sponsored workshop focused on the economic implications of mandatory labeling. Part two builds on the last two years' outreach activities and national lecture series, "Vietnam Biotech: Growing the Future," which have provided an important forum for Vietnamese scientists and biotech supporters and helped educate the public and the media. The 2010 series will focus on the advantages of biotechnology for food security, climate change and sustainable development. End Summary.

MEETING UNITED STATES POLICY OBJECTIVES

13. (SBU) Mission Vietnam's proposed outreach activities will promote a greater understanding of the practical benefits of biotechnology as the GVN develops its biotech regulatory framework, including labeling requirements. Once completed, the framework could better secure the lucrative biotech market in Vietnam for U.S. biotech exports and help to expand the market to include biotech seeds and plants. Convincing the GVN to remove the mandatory labeling provision in the Food Safety Law could significantly help U.S. companies, as well as Vietnam's own biotech industry. (Note: A mandatory labeling regime in Vietnam could negatively impact U.S. exports of feed grains and ingredients, soybeans, meal and oil to Vietnam, which totaled more than \$237 million in 2009. End note.) Greater support for biotechnology in Vietnam could also help position Vietnam as a key ally in the region to advocate for and support broader adoption of biotechnology products in ASEAN. This proposal also addresses issues of food security and sustainable development.

PROPOSAL PART ONE: FOCUS ON KEY NA DECISION MAKERS

14. (SBU) Since the GVN first tabled the Food Safety Law three

years ago, USDA, State Department, and USAID have worked together to try to convince the GVN to remove the mandatory labeling provision. Unfortunately, the provision remains, and the NA is expected to take a final vote on the draft law in early June 2010. Despite the USG's sustained efforts, the "eleventh hour" has arrived, and time and opportunities to positively affect the NA's understanding of biotechnology are now very limited.

¶5. (SBU) As the NA's Science, Technology and Environment Committee (STEC) is the committee in charge of shepherding the Food Safety Law through the NA's legislative process, it can significantly influence how the NA ultimately votes on the law. STEC recently contacted us to see if we could organize a workshop in the United States for several key members of the STEC to increase their awareness and understanding of the economic ramifications of mandatory biotech labeling.

PART ONE: ACTIVITIES, BUDGET AND TIME FRAME

¶6. (U) Post would send NA STEC members to the United States for a workshop targeted at educating the members on the benefits of biotechnology and the economic costs of mandatory labeling in March 2010. The program cost is estimated at \$15,000 for 10 economy class, round-trip airfare tickets from Hanoi to Washington, DC for the 10 participants. The workshop will be funded by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), which is implementing the U.S. Agency for International Development's Program on Biosafety Systems (PBS). IFPRI/PBS, which has been working with the GVN to launch a practical, operational biosafety system in Vietnam, will design the workshop.

HANOI 00000128 002 OF 003

¶7. (U) Post action officer for the NA workshop is Agricultural Counselor Jeanne Bailey, Jeanne.bailey@fas.usda.gov, 84-4-3850-5000, ext 5118. Back-up contact is Agricultural Attach???? Justin Taylor, Justin.taylor@fas.usda.gov, 84-4-3850-5000, ext 5083.

PROPOSAL PART TWO: NATIONAL LECTURE SERIES AND MEDIA OUTREACH

¶8. (U) Based on our successful 2008 and 2009 biotech outreach activities and in consultation with our partners at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), we propose a national lecture series, "Vietnam Biotech III: Growing the Future," focusing on the benefits of biotechnology for food security, climate change and sustainable development. Project activities will complement ongoing U.S. efforts to promote the acceptance of biotechnology in Vietnam, and to encourage Vietnamese policymakers to finalize draft regulations favorable to biotechnology trade, research and development.

¶9. (SBU) Although some senior level GVN officials, academics, and researchers have expressed support for biotechnology, some key ministries and officials, as well as the public, are uninformed (or misinformed) about the safety of biotechnology for agricultural products. Therefore, Mission Vietnam proposes to focus 2010 outreach activities on increasing knowledge about the safety and benefits of biotech products, and their role in Vietnam's sustainable development, among targeted ministries, officials, researchers, and businesses (via a lecture series), as well as the general public (via media channels).

PART TWO: ACTIVITIES, BUDGET AND TIME FRAME

¶10. (U) The 2010 biotech lecture program would be a weeklong series of events with four half-day workshops featuring an American keynote speaker who is a biotech expert. Each half-day workshop would have a slightly different but related target audience. All events would be designed to build an understanding of biotechnology and its role in Vietnam's sustainable development goals, including the importance of biotech in responding to climate change. Each workshop would include media coverage and opportunities for information sharing with Vietnamese experts and participants. Our American guest speaker would also be available for additional related meetings and discussions as appropriate.

Project activities will begin as soon as possible. The proposed

outreach conference series locations include:

- Hanoi, the capital, focus on policy makers.
- Ho Chi Minh City, the commercial center, focus on agricultural businesses
- University of Can Tho (Can Tho is the breadbasket of Vietnam), focus on researchers, academics and students.
- Vinh Phuc (a maize growing province interested in field testing biotech), focus on local agriculture officials and farmers.

¶11. (U) Working with our partners at MARD and at the Biotech Center in Ho Chi Minh City, we would organize a media round-table with participation of biotech experts and journalists. The participants will discuss the safety and benefits of biotech products, which would contribute to achieving Vietnam's goals of producing more food while protecting the environment. This discussion will be televised so the message can reach the broader public.

¶12. (U) The total program cost would be approximately \$22,700 as follows:

National Lecture Series Costs

--Travel costs (1 expert): \$5,600
--Hotel, per diem, honorarium (1 expert for 6 days): \$3,600
--Four half-day workshops (total): \$10,000

Lecture Series Total: \$19,200

Round-table Costs

-- Facility cost for a half-day round-table, and filming cost:
\$3,500

¶13. (U) Post action officer is Economic Officer Marcie Friedman, friedmanmh@state.gov, +84 4 850 5092. Backup contact is Andrew

HANOI 00000128 003 OF 003

Herrup, ESTH Officer, herrupar@state.gov, +84 4 850 5017.

CONCLUSION

¶14. (U) Promoting the development of biotechnology in Vietnam remains an important U.S. policy goal. Mission Vietnam's two part proposal integrates both the immediate and longer term needs by specifically targeting key NA decision makers in Part One of the proposal, while continuing broader outreach to the public, media, scientists, and commercial agricultural community in Part Two.

¶15. (U) This cable was coordinated with U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City.
Michalak